

## FORMING ADVISORY BOARDS

Healthy Tomorrows Partnership for Children programs must have or establish an advisory board in their program structure. Advisory boards are an objective source of information and guidance made up of project stakeholders, members of the target population, experts in child health or related fields and project partners. The advisory board serves as a valuable resource to provide feedback and connect you more closely to your community.

### Establishing an Advisory Board

- ✓ Think of your program's goals and the target population you wish to serve when choosing your advisory committee members.
- ✓ Determine the needs of your project and choose people who represent those needs. For example, it might be helpful to include individuals with funding expertise, evaluation experience, or the family perspective.
- ✓ Plan ahead for board meetings. During the start-up phase of the program, your advisory group may need to meet more frequently as they establish a relationship with your program and each other, and as the problems of implementation are ironed out.
- ✓ Define the role and expectation of the advisory board. This will help potential members determine if they can make the time commitment and fulfill the expectation necessary to participate. Advisory board members will be invested in the project when their role is clear and their input is appreciated.
- ✓ Value the time, commitment and expertise provided by the advisory board members. Consider providing an incentive for their involvement.

### Whom to Invite

- ✓ Involve potential members of the population the program serves. A parent/caregiver or patient may not be able to attend regular advisory board meetings, but you should ensure their voice is heard. Forming a parent-only advisory board in addition to the main advisory board may help program participants feel more comfortable to voice their concerns or suggestions and provide the project staff unique insight into the project's activities.
- ✓ Advisory board members should be knowledgeable or experienced on the project topic, in service provision, in working with the target population, providing the family perspective, or with community resources.
- ✓ Refer to refer to the table on page 6 in the Developing a Program Proposal section. The people who helped you plan the program can also be instrumental in providing guidance and resources as the project moves forward.
- ✓ Build diversity into the advisory board. Include key individuals and representatives of organizations and institutions relevant to the success of the project and of the community served by the project.

### The Activities of an Advisory Board

- ✓ Advisory boards will have regularly scheduled meetings. Some projects may plan for a monthly meeting, while others will meet with the advisory board on a quarterly basis.
- ✓ The members of the advisory board can also be asked to provide resources from their institution, assist in fundraising or securing additional grants, or participate in other supportive activities for the project.
- ✓ Advisory board members can be asked to review the project's annual progress reports before submission and provide feedback.

- ✓ Members can review promotional, educational, and evaluation material developed by the project.
- ✓ Advisory boards can provide guidance and feedback regarding the project's evaluation plan or offer suggestions or strategies when project challenges occur.
- ✓ Advisory boards may have special sub-committees to advise the project on special topics like evaluation, health content, or outreach.

#### **Benefits of an Advisory Board**

- ✓ Membership on an advisory board is voluntary. However, members may benefit, as may the program, through mutual referrals and networking with other members of the advisory board.
- ✓ The program should gain valuable input and feedback from the board that improves its operations and linkages to the community.
- ✓ Advisory board members may provide training to staff or clients served by the project to improve the quality of services provided.
- ✓ Advisory board members may help secure additional sources of funding.

#### **Challenges of an Advisory Board**

- ✓ Coordinating schedules of a mixed group with multiple outside obligations may be a challenge. Scheduling a year of meetings in advance may be helpful. Also arranging different meeting styles such as in-person (i.e. Brown bag lunches or grand rounds) and conference calls.
- ✓ Conflicting opinions of board members. Prepare the group to work effectively as a team. Set clear expectations on respecting differing opinions that may arise among advisory board members.

#### **Other Advisory Board Resources:**

##### [Collaboration Primer, Health Research and Educational Trust](#)

Building on the lessons learned from the National Community Care Network Demonstration Program and Evaluation, this Health Research and Educational Trust publication provides recommendations for building a successful and operative collaboration.

##### [Michigan Community Service Commission: Developing and Maintaining Advisory Boards](#)

The Michigan Community Service Commission resource provides links to an advisory toolkit, sample by-laws, and retention strategies for advisory boards.

##### [Minnesota Department of Health, Community Engagement](#)

Community engagement means involving community members in ALL activities--from identifying the relevant issues and making decisions about how to address them, to evaluating and sharing the results with the community. The information on these Web pages provides background, tips and tools for effective community engagement.